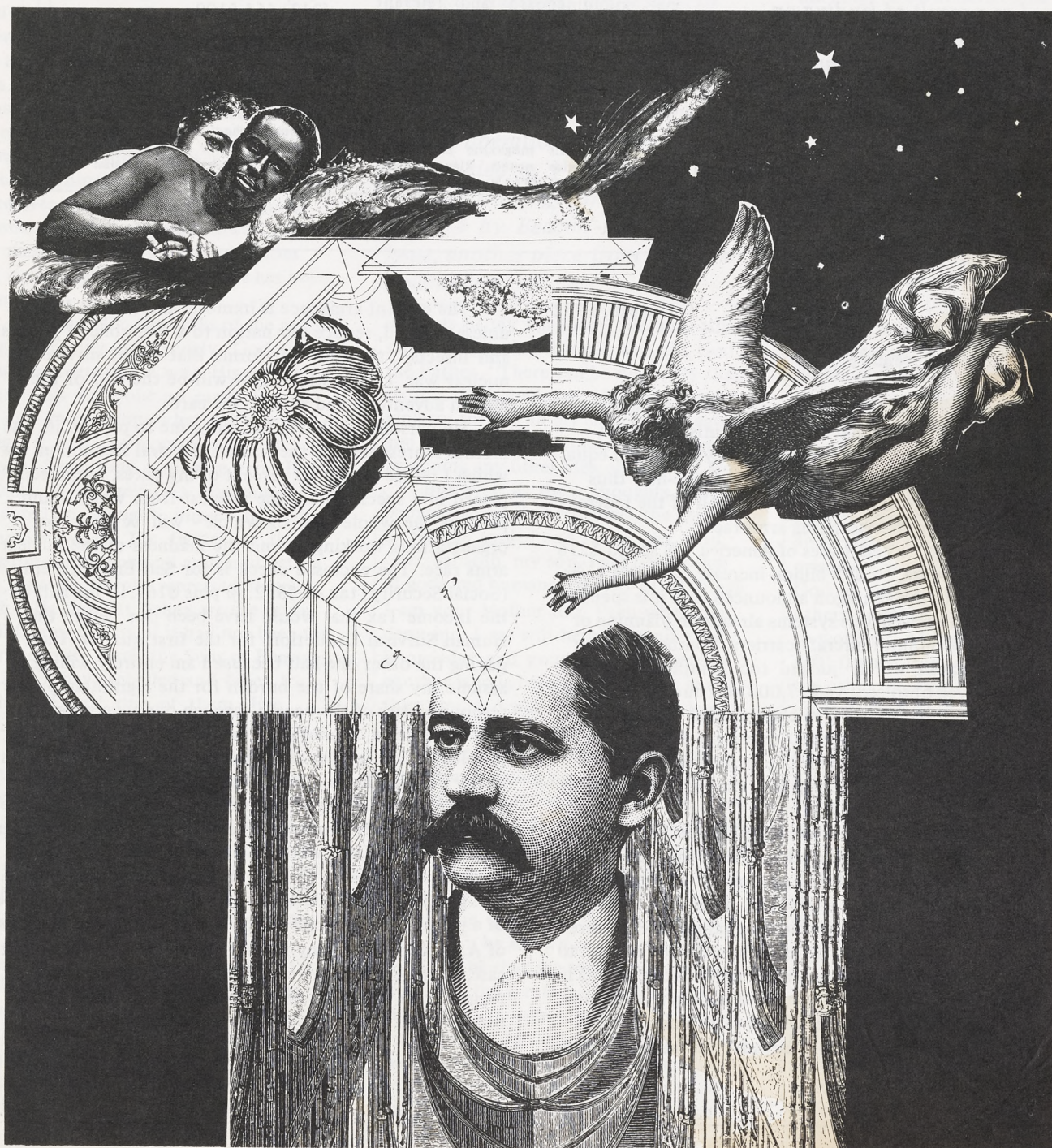


# THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A journal of  
theological  
reflection  
from Metropolitan  
Community Church



Gralley

SECOND QUARTER 1982

\$1



*THE GAY CHRISTIAN is back, hoping that you've missed us at least a little. The Editor would like to thank you, Dear Patient Reader, for your forbearance and understanding: having been incapacitated first by a serious accident during the past Summer, and then by the backlog of work awaiting him upon the return to pastoral duties etc. ("Him" means, of course "me," in editor-language.) The Reader will be pleased, or dismayed, to learn that my Opinions have not substantially been rearranged as a result of landing on my head, save on the subjects of The Vulnerability of Life and the Necessity for Improving the Present Moment; and The Surpassing Importance of Just Plain Caring.*

*Anyway, we hope you find this issue stimulating good company on your ongoing journey.*

--fjd

# THE GAY CHRISTIAN

THE GAY CHRISTIAN is a theological journal of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Its purpose is to build community among people of faith who happen also to be gay, women, or members of other sexual minorities by providing a theological soundingboard and relevant ecumenical news. TGC writers speak for themselves; their viewpoints do no necessarily represent any official policy, position, or doctrine of UFMCC.

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April, 1982

To the Internal Revenue Service:

This is to inform you that due to a "Human Survival Deduction" on Schedule A under "miscellaneous deductions," my quarterly income tax payments will equal one-half of the taxes otherwise due. The one-half thus withheld cries a protest against the one-half of the federal budget devoted to the escalating arms race.

In 1982, the United States of America will spend \$216 billion on "Defense," a \$33 billion increase, I believe, over 1981. In March, the Pentagon announced that it is spending \$454.8 billion on weapons systems already in planning or production. Mammoth aircraft carriers, bombers, fighter planes and tanks widely judged too complex, large, vulnerable, even obsolete. And 17,000 new nuclear weapons to be added to our existing nuclear arsenal of 25,000 to produce a new total of 42,000 nuclear weapons. The Administration plans to spend \$1.6 trillion over the next five years on a weapons buildup that Pentagon officials say will actually cost \$2.35 trillion.

The Administration has dismissed urgent calls for an arms freeze, calling instead for this massive increase in our nuclear arsenal, for the alleged purpose of gaining parity with the Soviet Union, as if the U.S. arsenal of more accurate and sophisticated weapons equalling in explosive force a quarter of a million Hiroshimas were not enough to utterly destroy the Soviet Union and much more, and as if the Soviets would not concurrently be adding to their own arsenals. As if 50,000 nuclear weapons, the equivalent of 550,000 Hiroshimas, were not already too many for our planet.

The current arms race is immoral and crazed. It will, unless stopped, reduce our nation to a "republic of grasses and insects," the only life-forms that could survive a nuclear war. Unless stopped, it will be the end of the human adventure, and with it, the earth.

My personal faith will not allow me to pay for it. The monies represented by the Human Survival Deduction, by which I refuse to pay 50 percent of my taxes, have been placed in a special fund, the interest from which - and perhaps the whole sum of which - will be given to organizations working to end the madness of the nuclear arms race. The enclosed check is for Self-Employment (Social Security) tax of \$352.50 plus \$167.19 for half of the Income Tax that would have been due before the Human Survival Deduction, for the first quarter. I am paying the other one-half because I am entirely willing to assume my share of the burden for the legitimate public responsibilities of the people through our government.

In addition, should the Congress of the United States pass legislation further abridging the civil rights and access of my people, the gay and lesbian people of this land - for instance, such denials of rights as are contained within the so-called "Family Protection Act" - I shall claim a "Human Dignity Deduction" whereby I shall refuse to pay any income tax whatever, placing the monies in a similar fund. This government should not expect the support or allegiance of a people whose access to the opportunities and benefits of American life are any further abridged. I would, in that case, consider that I have no further obligation to support a regime both of deadly violence against life itself, and of fundamental denial of our people's humanity.

REV. F. JAY DEACON



# THE KENOSIS OF THE FATHER

## A FEMINIST MIDRASH ON THE GOSPELS

ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER

### Act I: The Kenosis of the Father

"I AM THE LORD thy God, Thou shalt have no other gods before me", bellowed God the Father, as He seated himself high upon his Cherubim throne and surveyed the ranks of angels doing obeisance to Him. Having expelled the quarrelsome Sons of Heaven who disputed his reign, order had finally been restored in the Heavens. Earth, however was a different problem. Things had been chaotic down there ever since the rebellious Sons of Heaven departed and went down to rape the daughters on humankind. From this violence all sort of monsters has been born.

All about Him the ranks of the angels sang His praises unceasingly. God the Father was frustrated with His inability to have His will done on earth. But He was also getting somewhat bored with having it done so complacently in Heaven. Something is missing here, He thought to Himself. As His mind wandered in thought, images floated before His eyes. The figures of the daughters of humankind appeared before Him, but He sternly repressed them. "Ugh", He thought, "they are the cause of all Our problems. If it had not been for their seductive form, the Sons of Heaven would not have rebelled and fallen to earth. The first one of them, Eve, disrupted my original plans for paradise. I had to show her that the real world means men ruling and women obeying, bringing forth children in sorrow and being in subjugation to their husbands."

Then another image floated before his eyes, a shining figure clothed in a dark mantle covered with stars, crowned with the moon and holding in her hands fruits and flowers. "My god", He half exclaimed, to the surprise of some of the angels who overheard Him, "the Queen of Heaven". "Why does she still appear in my thoughts? I thought I crushed her rule a millennium ago. Could it be that somewhere, outside my omniscience and the sharp eyes of my couriers, who survey

*Rosemary Radford Ruether is Georgia Harkness Professor of Theology at Garrett - Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois. She is author of many volumes on theology, women, and human liberation. This article will be included in Volume I of her feminist theology to be published in 1984 by Beacon Press. Next issue, another piece from the same upcoming work.*

all parts of my Kingdom, she does still reign? I know all things", thought God the Father. "There can be no reality that escapes my knowledge. My decree against idolatry forbids all my subjects in heaven and on earth from worshipping or even imagining any other idea of God but Me."

But even as these thoughts were being articulated in his mind, the Queen of Heaven smiled and shook Her head. "No, Sabaoth, my son. I am the Mother of gods and humans, creatrix of all things. I am your Mother too. Even when you deny me, I am still here, beyond your knowledge and your decrees. There is another who is before you, who is greater than you, and who will survive the death of your reign in the heavens."

Sabaoth was startled by these words. He felt a shooting pang of anxiety and even of guilt, such as he had not felt since he had defeated the Queen of Heaven and deposed her daughter Eve from her power in the garden of paradise. At that time he had walled off the pillars of the cosmos against the Queen so that she should never again be known or come to mind. "Could it be that my own decree against idolatry is the greatest idolatry of all?" he thought. "The angels that sing my praises, the kings of earth that bow down before me in their temples cry that I am their only lord and ask me for help in their battles, perhaps I have become more

their creature than their creator? I and the kings of earth have come to resemble each other too closely. By calling me Father, Lord and Ruler, they claim the power to rule the earth as I rule the heavens. Beneath their feet ranks of servants bow down before them as the angels bow before me. Men teach women their place on earth, following my example. Perhaps this hierarchy of earth and heaven is a facade, a delusion, concealing other realities that we dare not know. The rebelliousness that I experience among my sons, the rebelliousness that the kings of earth experience among their men servants, and, even worse, their maid servants, points to this other reality. Perhaps it is she! There is another power outside Our rule that still eludes us!"

"In former times I have known other ways of being God", God the Father reflected; "to put the might down from their thrones; to vindicate the oppressed and release the captives from their prisons. I must call these ways of being God to mind again, even extend it to others, to slaves, to gentiles, perhaps even to women." At these thoughts a bolt of light flashed from one end of the skies to the other, rending the closed fabric of the universe and opening a crack through which there poured a beam of light from beyond. Like a shooting star this light flew to earth. An echo arose the comet like a whisper through the heavens:

Being in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be prized, but emptied himself and became a servant.

A young bride, newly married, was lying with her husband, Joseph, in their home in Nazareth at that moment. The heavenly spark entered her and fused with the fertilized egg of the newly conceived child.



## Act II: The Iconoclastic Teacher

### Scene I:

A small dusty band trudged along the road toward Jerusalem. Simon bar Jonah had been a member of the Sicarii, a bandit group that struck down collaborators with the hated foreign rulers. James and John, sons of Zebedee, also had been followers of rebel groups before they attached themselves to the rabbi from Nazareth. It was hard to explain his hold on them because, in many ways, he taught a puzzling and uncongenial message. He spoke, as the Baptist had, of the need to repent and of the nearness of the Kingdom of God. They knew what that meant. It meant that they, the true remnant of the people of Israel, must adhere strictly to the laws that had been taught by God to their ancestors. Only those who repented of all foreign ways could hope to be within the Israel of redemption when God came. The sons of Zaddok, who had withdrawn into communities in the desert, also repented of these same things, but they spent their time puzzling over the ancient prophecies in their libraries. They were not ready to pick up the sword to anticipate divine vengeance on the Kittim from beyond the seas.

Soon the heavens would open and God Himself would appear with his many hosts of angels. They would be ready to join with these heavenly hosts of God. Together they would defeat forever the evil armies of the foreign conqueror. The Beast of Rome would be bound and thrown forever into a pit of fire. But they, the loyal sons of God, would be exalted and become the new rulers of the earth. God's son, the Messiah, would appear and set up thrones to judge the nations, and they would reign on his right side and on his left.

The sons of Zebedee, being bolder than the rest, went to Jesus on the side and suggested that they, in particular, should be his right hand men when he came into his Kingdom. But he shook his head with that look of profound sorrow that he often had when they spoke to him of their expectations in this way. "No", he insisted, "we must have a different view of the world to come. It must not be a world where one ruler replaces another, but a world where rulers and ruled are no more. Don't you see how much your ideas of power resemble those of the gentiles? They have rulers who lord it over them; their great men

exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever wishes to be great among you must be as a servant, and whoever would be first must be first in helping other. The Messiah, the One who is to come for which you look, will not come as king, but as servant of all. He will not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many.

There it was again, that annoying message! No man was more daring in criticizing the authorities than he. The quibbling scribes and the wealthy nobility of the priestly classes really got their noses put out of joint when he spoke. He unmasked the hypocrisy of the ruling classes and showed that the unwashed, the poor folk of the countryside had found God's favor. But when they tried to get him to seize the times and declare himself the King Messiah to lead them in the revolt, he constantly tried to put before their eyes this other understanding of the world to come, one in which there would be no more rulers and ruled; where there would be no more Jew and Greek; where all would be brothers - and sisters! Who had ever heard of such a thing!

The women; that was the most puzzling part of his behavior. He insisted on treating them as equals. He even vindicated their right to be members of the fellowship of disciples gathered around him, instead of sticking in the kitchen and preparing the food for us, like good Jewish women. When Mary joined the fellowship who were listening to his teaching, neglecting to help her sister Martha who was making our dinner in the kitchen, he even justified her, saying that "she had chosen the better part, which would not be taken from her!" When has a rabbi spoken like this before? He tells us to act like servants, but he tells women that they don't have to be servants, but can join the disciples as equals!

He even suggests that the women of the poor and the unclean classes; Samaritan women, slave women, prostitutes, will come into the Kingdom of God ahead of the scribes and the Pharisees. We enjoyed the discomfiture of the scribes and Pharisees when he said that. But even we thought that was going a bit far. It certainly makes sense to say that we good country folk will find God's favor against those smart snobs of the city. But to say that prostitutes and tax collectors will go into the Kingdom of God first! Well, there are limits to this

sort of thing. We who thank God every day that we were born Jew and not gentile, free and not slave, male and not female, know that God isn't going to change everything. There has to be some order, even in the world to come.

When the secret delegation of the sons of Zebedee became known, a wave of indignation swept the disciples. There was jealousy and fear among the other disciples, particularly Peter, that these two Sons of Thunder might have found favor with Jesus, even persuaded him to put them first. They were relieved that Jesus had given them a prompt rebuke for their importunity. Only Mary Magdalene laughed out loud when she heard it, as she often did when such incidents took place. She stole a sympathetic glance toward Jesus who was walking a bit apart in silent meditation. There was a closeness between these two that was annoying to the man, as though she understood him in some way that they did not. It seemed indecent for a rabbi to take a woman into his confidence in that way.

### Scene II.

Peter's heart pounded as he ran though the narrow streets of Jerusalem. The police of the High Priest, lackies of the Romans, were on his heels. He saw an open sewer and dived into it, crawling into a dank corner while his pursuers raced overhead. Terrible visions of the last days were etched in his brain. He and the other fellows hadn't meant any harm when they staged that entrance into Jerusalem, with Jesus on the royal white mule and the festival crowd waving their lulavs and chanting the ancient greeting song to the Davidic king. We had to force Jesus hand, make him take up his role as king. The time was ripe. He himself had said that the crisis was near, that soon God would intervene to overthrow the reign of the Evil ones.

But when Jesus came into the hideaway on the Mount of Olives where we were preparing arms for an assault on Roman rule, he turned against it. "No", he cried. "Those who take the sword will perish by the sword. We must not presume upon God. We must be sure that this is indeed the acceptable time and that we are indeed the ones to do God's will. If the time is truly at hand, these few arms will be superfluous. The legions of angels do not need such help from us.



We look for more than just the taking of power. We look for the remaking of the earth itself; lifting the valleys, making the hills low. Only God can do this. It cannot be done with clubs and swords."

"But even as he spoke, the torches of the soldiers and police were to be seen. There was a skirmish. I and some of the other disciples picked up weapons and tried to make a stand. But we were outnumbered and soon scattered and fled. We were unable to rescue Jesus. We had to leave him behind in the hands of the soldiers. After a hearing before the High Priest, we heard that he was brought before the court of the Procurator and then dragged off with several other rebels to prison on charges of banditry and conspiring against the government. The next day Jesus, together with several other rebel leaders, were crucified in the usual manner of Roman 'justice'."

The disciples were afraid to show themselves because the police and the soldiers were still hunting for them. But the women, particularly Mary of Magdala, stayed as close to what was happening as possible and sent them messages about what was going on. The women were among the crowd that went out to the place of the crucifixion and witnessed his death. Mary recalled that, even as he was being stretched on the cross, his eyes kept searching the heavens. He was waiting for the clouds to open and for his heavenly Father to appear with a host of angels to snatch him from the hands of his enemies and to bring about the redemption of Israel. He even cried out for Elijah. Then, just before he died, a black cloud passed over the hill, darkening the whole area around. They heard Jesus call out in a loud voice, *Eli, Eli, la'ma sabach-tha'ni* (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me). Then his head slumped on his chest and all was silence.

### Act III. Mary Magdalene's Witness

Mary had been crouched for two days near the tomb where she and the two other women had laid Jesus, with the help of Joseph of Arimathea, after the soldiers had dumped his body in the potter's field. Was this the end of their hopes? The men seemed to think so. They had all scattered at Jesus' arrest and imprisonment. Some had even started back to Galilee. But she knew that some new fire had been kindled in her by this man that she could not let go. A breeze stirred her hair. She turned around and saw a figure standing in the mist. Could it

be he? The apparition spoke to her; "Mary, I am risen. I am no longer here. Do not look for me among the dead, but among the living". The figure faded away, but she saw behind it a taller and more majestic image, regal and yet somehow familiar, a woman like herself. "You, Mary", said the vision, "are the risen one. Do not look for another. The world to come is within you. Start with what is in your own heart."

Suddenly all her confusion disappeared, and Mary felt a clear, calm center within herself. "So this is why he had to die", she thought, "he tried to teach us to give up our fantasies of power and revenge. But we could not hear him. As long as he was here among us, we wanted him to take power, to replace the kingship of the gentiles with the kingship of Israel. But our ideas of God's rule were still based on domination and subjugation. Only by bringing these hopes to an end with his death could we be forced to give up these dreams and find a different answer within ourselves, the answer that he had been trying to teach us all along. We must make ourselves and our relationships with each other anew. This is the beginning of the new world. Only when we are no longer slaves, but also no longer desire to be masters and make our former masters into slaves, can we lay the foundation for the world to come."

Mary ran back to the room above the store where some of the disciples were hiding to tell them of her experience and the messages that she had been given by Jesus and the angelic woman. But the men scoffed at her at first. "Would Jesus have appeared first to her and not to us", they said? "Would the Lord have preferred a woman to us men? Women by Mosaic law are not even allowed to be witnesses. Surely the Lord would not have entrusted such a message to a woman!"

Mary tried to make them understand that it was not important who gave the witness or even that he had risen at all. What was important is that he had left them so that they would no longer pin false hopes on him, so that they could learn to bould the new humanity of the world to come without rulers and without subjects. They must begin among themselves to live the new life with each other. Some of the disciples were struck by what she said. But Peter soon had a different idea and drew their attention away from her. "Look", Peter declared, "this is what we didn't understand

before. Our hopes for the coming of the Messianic king have not been shattered. They have just been postponed a little while. Jesus has been snatched up to heaven by his Father. He is reigning there now on the right hand of God. Even now his heavenly Father is putting him in command of the heavenly hosts. Soon the clouds will open and he will return with the angelic army to overthrow the Romans and their lackies, the High Priests, and put us in power".

"We, the men, must be in charge of this revelation. We must not let Mary and the other women take too much credit, just because they were present when he died and were the first to see him when he rose from the dead. It will make us look ridiculous if we tell it about that we heard this from women! Only men can gather a true community of Israel. Only men can represent the Messiah and his heavenly Father. We must proclaim this message in his name. There is still time for many of the Jews and even the gentiles to listen. Jesus will become the one great name before whom every knee shall bow on earth and in heaven".

As Mary heard them talking in this way, she turned and slipped away from the room and walked to a quiet place outside the city where she could sit quietly with the shade of a tree shielding her from the warmth of the mid-morning sun. She knew that she had glimpsed a momentous new thing, the key to the whole mystery of the world to come that had eluded them throughout Jesus' lifetime. Jesus had tried to make them understand this, but the disciples had never understood. Perhaps even he had not understood fully the full meaning of this transformation. But there was no one to tell it to, no one to understand.

Mary glanced toward the sky. Where was his heavenly Father when he died, she thought? He did not answer his cry. The heavens were silent. The angels did not appear to draw him out of many waters and set him upon the Mount of Zion to execute judgement upon his enemies and to hold dominion forever, as was promised. Perhaps there are no heavenly hosts to appear upon the clouds? Is the heavenly throne empty? Perhaps it is this very idea of God as a great king, ruling over nations as his servants, that has been done away with by Jesus' death on the cross. With Jesus' death, God the heavenly Ruler, has left the heavens and has been poured out upon the earth with his blood. A new



God is being born in our hearts to teach us to level the heavens and exalt the earth and create a new world without masters and slaves, rulers and subjects; no, not even men as first and women kept behind in meek servility. This is what Jesus meant when he taught us to pray for God's Kingdom to come, for God's will to be done *on earth*, as it is in heaven; to forgive each other, and not to be led into temptation, but delivered from evil.

But who will be ready to hear this message, Mary thought. Although the throne of God has been emptied at Jesus' death, even now Peter and some of the other disciples are busy trying to fill it again. They will fashion the risen Jesus into a new Lord and Master to represent the heavenly Father and to rule upon the earth. Oh yes, they were his humble servants. In his name they will rebuke the Jews and conquer the gentiles, lording it

over them as the Romans now lord over us. Mary shuddered. Is there any way to rend this fabric, to let the light of this other world shine through? Perhaps something of this other vision will still get through the distortion. Other people, even women like myself, will glimpse something of the real vision, and they will recognize me as their sister.

# The Tasks

GOD IS CALLING THE  
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES  
TO PERFORM

JAMES S. TINNEY

*An Address to the 10th International General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, Meeting in Houston.*

I COME TO YOU today from the midst of battle. Since organizing the Pentecostal Coalition for Human Rights last year, I have become the subject of numerous attacks. Some, who I thought were friends, have deserted and gone. One bishop of our church has called my name publicly in a sermon before a jurisdictional conference; and another has written a two-part article against my position in our denominational periodical. The Pentecostal chaplain at Howard University has removed me from my position as faculty advisor to the Pentecostal Student Fellowship after having served in this capacity for more than seven years. And the leading interdenominational Pentecostal/Charismatic magazine in the nation, in its last issue, called for my excommunication from the church.

But these examples are not something entirely new. All my life as a Christian I have known suffering. I was taught to deny my most inherent self, flagellate my spirit for my so-called "carnal lusts," penitently grovel in the floor every time I thought about sex, and spend sleepless nights in fear that I might die and go to hell before having another night's chance to prove that I could go to sleep with more ascetic fantasies and dreams.

I have also been rejected by my wife, who tore my two daughters from my breast and left me without warning to face the future alone - despite the fact that I had begged her to stay, had asked her to let me live with them, and had

assured her that my sexuality was not the sum total of relationships (whether husbanding or parenting).

I have been told by a trusted friend that homosexuality is most rampant among persons who are either extremely light or extremely dark in complexion, as if both light-skin and gayness were twin symptoms of some physical plague or innate deficiency.

I have also suffered from the pains of having a former pastor accuse me of desecrating the house of God by using a church phone to talk to a male friend - a pastor who threatened to call the police and have me arrested in his own office, and who advised my wife (in my presence) that she should leave me since I was unfit to rear our children, and who forced me to sign a letter of confession and resignation from the ministry under the lie that God would never use me to speak God's name in public again.

I have endured endless prophecies in church - prophecies of God's hatred, my forthcoming poverty, and of having "crossed the line" which marked the point of impossible return to grace. Even worse, I have been told (and convinced, at one point) that my love for men was the result of hordes of live, overpowering demons, straight from hell, within my bosom. Who can even imagine the total anomie, despair and self-hatred that were thus heaped upon me, causing me to publicly undergo a ritual of exorcism aimed at ridding my body of

this so-called Satanic possession.

I know what it is to live, almost daily, under the catcalls of "punk," "faggot," "sissy" - all announced before friends and enemies, males and females, sinners and saints, at every conceivable location: at church, the grocery, the corner store, school, on public transit, and more. Only those who endure such flagrant violence to the human spirit know the fear, the fatigue, and the temporary emotional and mental disorientation that occur under such circumstances, causing a person to become afraid to smile, to say hello, or even ask a harmless question of direction, lest it be misinterpreted as a solicitation and provoke a volley of verbal abuse. Nor has it all been verbal. Many times I have been robbed, attacked, kicked, and beaten - once in broad daylight on a crowded downtown street - for no other reason than that I was who I am.

I have had my humanity reviled, my spirituality condemned, my academic research questioned, my speeches interrupted, my job threatened, my own family taken from me, and my own body hurt and abused. And for what reason? Simply because I am who I am - a lonely soul crying out in the midst of an inhumane world for the freedom to love.

Ask me not if my suffering causes me to long for some other orientation, some different direction of affection - as if I would become heterosexual if I could. My answer is this: Never would I choose



to be other than I am. If I were to exchange who I am and what I am for some other, it would be no longer I who lived, but them. My being is God's gift of creation; to deny myself would be to deny God's own self.

Therefore, let the world pity me not for my past misfortunes, as if having been told the story of lifelong oppression they now "understand" why I am a homosexual - making victimization the cause of my identity rather than the result of it. As long as I can remember, I have loved men as the most natural thing I can do. I was yearning for men at the age of four, and possibly earlier. That desire that sense of longing - has guided every decision I have ever made, every conflict I have ever resolved, every hope I have ever dreamed, every experience of mind and body and spirit I have undergone, and every lesson I have learned.

Tell me no more that I deserve the pains of hell, the fears of conscience, and eternal suffering. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that I have suffered enough already to atone for every sin I have ever done, if suffering were sufficient to erase them. And I have suffered meritoriously. I am no martyr. But I tell you that all the martyrs that have ever lived have died no more senseless death than that which is done to my spirit and my integrity every day.

But I have come to the point where I refuse to let fear control my life any longer. I choose the option of confronting both fear and those who make me fearful. And I refuse to give fear more respect than the respect I give my own nature and my enabling God.

Am I saddened because of the injustices that the family, the church, the school, the government, this society, have heaped upon me? Never. I am not sad; I am angry. And when I realize that my own injustice is but a minute part of the injustice that is multiplied in the lives of millions of others like me, my anger is compounded. I live every moment in the realization that anger can be a channel of redemption insofar as I understand it, accept it, and utilize it to struggle against oppression. It is not my anger, it is their anger that cannot be understood and must not be accepted. My anger, your anger, our anger, are gifts of God; and our willingness to act upon it is the only hope we have for a better world.

Unfortunately, much of our suffering as lesbians and gays comes from the church itself. From the earliest beginnings

of time, there were men from the same rooted tree from which Judaism and Christianity later blossomed, who decided in themselves that they would preserve for themselves the fruits of everybody's labor. They would decide who would get what. Of course, this hierarchical distribution displaced certain persons from power, and often from sharing the surpluses. Of course, children were put out, women were put out, lesbians and gays were put out, people of other faiths were put out, and people of other nationalities were put out - in order to preserve the successes and royalties for a select number of white, heterosexual men.

This practice was carried over - in the name of God and Christianity - until eventually the patriarchal nuclear family was viewed as the only pattern of God for the ages. The plan, of course, was for the man - the father - to be the head of that family. The man was to control the wealth. And the man would decide which of the children would inherit the wealth upon reaching adulthood.

In order to legitimize that rule, a change was also made in the arrangement of families into a nation-state. The nation-state became viewed as God's own select nation, to the exclusion of all others. The idea of an authoritarian and very narrowly defined family was transferred to the state. All family men then saw themselves as the progenitors of the state and as its protectors and its enactors.

These same patterns eventually were also carried over into the synagogue and the church. So that white straight men also inherited the rule of the spiritual "family of God" even as they had made themselves the rulers of society as a whole. Religion, in the process, became twisted and warped. It became desecrated in the name of God until, in many ways, it no longer served the functions God intended it to serve. To legitimize the social system of oppression, people were taught that God was only a father, but not a mother. They were taught that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to establish a hierarchical kingdom, rather than a community of equal persons. They were taught that Jesus' supreme title was lord, rather than savior, comforter, or liberator. They were taught that women were less than men - because God was male, and because only men could rightfully assume the prerogatives of God.

The oppression of lesbians and gays was also legitimized by the teaching that

God was "straight," forbidding homosexual men to inherit the fruits. And they were taught, that since God has only one favorite nation - or, at most, two nations: Anglo-Saxons replacing the Israel of older times - whatever was done in the name of Judaism or Christianity or America was okay. They taught that, not only was God a "straight" man, but he also had blue eyes and white skin. Such a portrayal of course, legitimized oppression of peoples of color in the name of religion. So that Asian children, and Black children, and Hispanic children, would kneel down before paintings of a white Jesus with blonde hair.

Yet in this construction, the church has betrayed its own self. The social institution known as the church has left its calling and forsaken its God by creating and perpetuating these myths of sex and gender and race. It teaches middle class social values relative to sex and property. It contends that only men - heterosexual men - are fit to teach and to preach and to rule the house of God. It says that "women should keep silence in the churches," and that the church is the "bride of Christ," and that every soul should be subject and obedient to a male higher power. It says that white represents good, and black represents evil; and that the purpose of salvation is to "wash me whiter than snow," so that we can become "children of light" rather than darkness, and can be clothed in "white robes of righteousness."

To reinforce such mythology, all our children in evangelical churches are shown the so-called "Wordless Book." One page is held up - a black page - and the child is asked, "What is this? It is my heart before Jesus comes into my life." Then a red page is held up. "And what is this? It is the blood of Jesus that was shed for my sins." And then a white page is held up and the child is told, "This is what your dirty black heart will look like after Jesus washes you whiter than snow." As a result, from our earliest years, all of us - Black and white - are socialized into accepting a system of religion that oppresses all of us. What is worse, we don't even realize it.

I believe in salvation, but there are many ways to describe salvation other than "washing whiter than snow." I have been redeemed. I have been liberated. I have been set free. My sins are forgiven. My name is written in heaven. Why do I have to be "washed whiter than snow?"

To say, however, that religion has been twisted and changed from what it



was intended divinely to be, is not to pass judgment on religion itself, nor on God, nor on the concept of spirituality, nor on rituals of meaning and self-affirmation and symbols of ultimate value. It is not to dismiss Jesus Christ as divine or the possibility of the Holy Spirit working in this generation. But it is a rejection of Christianity as a system of exploitation - not a rejection of Christ. It is a rejection of the way "straight" white males have distorted it to serve their own ends, protect their own vested interests, and conserve their own privileges and power. Our call today is to rediscover, to find, that kernel of truth that has been covered over by layers of social oppression and lies and deception. We will then once again be able to repeat with meaning the words of the Christ who said, "The one whom I set free is free indeed!"

If we say that orthodox Christian faith is incompatible with women's liberation, or incompatible with Hispanic liberation or Black liberation, or incompatible with gay liberation, then we concede the greatest part of the opponents' argument; and I, for one, am not willing to do that. For this is what the organized Christian church has always said to us, that there existed an inherent contradiction between these movements and true faith. Our religious opponents desire nothing more than to hear that women and Blacks and Hispanics and gays have given up on the Christian faith - so they can be left alone to perpetuate their lies.

There is no evidence that becoming less Christian or less orthodox will further the cause of making the church more inclusive. The history of non-Christian religions, and of radical and political social movements, proves that racism and sexism are as "at home" in liberal and radical social and political and religious environments as they are in conservative Christian environments. Those of us who are Black have experienced many predominantly white movements and organizations which preach loudly against racism, but are themselves infected with racism. There are also organizations which preach against sexism, but which are themselves sexist. There are those who say they love homosexuals but hate the sin; all the while they really hate us, knowing as they do that they can't separate us from what they call our "sin." The Quakers were abolitionists, but they never got many Blacks to join their meetings. (And I am not speaking against Quakers.) The Unitarians, in spite

of their progressive stance against racism, have not been very successful in attracting Black members either. (And I do not speak against Unitarians; I recently spoke for their general convention, and appreciated so much that opportunity, and respect that denomination very much.) Even the United Church of Christ, which has the most active Commission on Racial Justice of any denomination, has fewer Black churches than the Seventh-Day Adventists. This says to me that the root of the problems of racism and sexism goes deeper than conservatism or liberalism. It is something systemic and organizational; something structural and at the very heart of Western society. It is something that has caused churches of all descriptions, from the most conservative to the most liberal, to be held almost powerless in its grip.

In order for MCC to conquer racism in its midst; in order to conquer sexism in its midst; even in order to conquer heterosexism in a gay church, we must discover the roots of oppression, so that we can smite it with a mighty blow. Otherwise, if we are not careful, when we cover up oppression in one corner, it will pop up in another form in another corner. I believe that God has raised up the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in order that it might become the church God intends all churches to become. But to be honest, I am distressed at the slowness of pace at which we ourselves, who call ourselves oppressed, are unable to deal with our own oppressiveness toward those who are different than us.

The first thing I think God is calling MCC to do, is to examine its relationship to culture. It must examine its relationship to "straight" culture. It must examine its relationship to gay culture. It must examine its relationship to Christianity as a system, and to what we think of as being Christian culture. MCC must discover the ways in which all three cultures have served oppression, to make certain we don't unwittingly permit the same instruments of oppression to survive in our own midst.

In order for MCC to become the church God wants it to be, it must thoroughly examine its relationships and its assumptions and its values to see how many of these come from culture rather than from God's word and will.

This means also that the church must reject the usage of white gay men by heterosexual market forces that are now controlling the movement of gays in

every major city. And those who are white and gay are going to have to realize that they are being exploited given a little space, a "gay ghetto" - simply for others' selfish corporate motives. There is a plan - it may not be a conscious conspiracy, but it operates just as devastatingly as if it were - a plan by which, first of all, lesbians and gays are themselves discriminated against in housing, and then ghettoized in gay residential areas, and then used as an unwitting vanguard to recapture properties in the central cities from the poor (who happen to be mostly Black and Hispanic), in preparation for the resale of those same properties, once renovated, to non-gay, white straight members of the ruling class. If we cannot understand this process by which property values escalate, and see how gays are being used in order to "get rid" of what society has called the "undesirable elements," to make way for the straight ruling class to take over, then we are really blind.

Racism, patriarchy, and homophobia are not just "sins." And MCC needs to clearly realize this. If racism and sexism were simply sins, then they could be confessed, forgiven, and forgotten. But it's not that easy. They are institutions, methods of organization and rule, of a social order. They are caused by sin, they express the character of sin, and they reinforce and promote more sin. But the church has erred in viewing racism and patriarchy and homophobia as simply sins themselves. This has led to two obvious conclusions. Either it can be ritualized away and not taken seriously, like other sins. Or it is such that it forever offends a holy God, who casts all sinners from grace - in effect, removing the offender from hope and the means of grace, as a hopeless and forlorn sinner. (Such a person reasons, "So, what, if I am a racist; I am going to hell anyway.") Either way, we imagine ourselves excused from assuming responsibility to uproot and remove and replace such institutions of evil.

Second, I believe God is calling MCC to develop a theology of sexuality. There are some, I am sure, who would prefer to speak of creating a "gay theology" or a theology of homosexual relations. But the truth is that a far more fundamental and dramatic effort is mandated than merely altering existing theology in only one aspect. We cannot satisfy the longings or the minds of the people as long as we pretend that all that is required of ministers and teachers is to reinterpret a



handful of scriptures referring to Sodom (in the Old Testament) and homosexual prostitution (in the New Testament). We are being intellectually dishonest and theologically lazy if we only try to reconcile lesbianism and homosexuality with traditional doctrines of fornication, adultery, lust, marriage, and chastity.

The confusion about lesbian and gay sexual ethics which now surrounds all Christians who are also practicing lesbians and gays, stems from this very failure to come up with a general theology of sexuality. It is time to quit pouring new wine into old wineskins. It is time to place this treasure in a new earthen vessel. Questions of sexuality are of extreme relevance to a whole bundle of other doctrines as well - doctrines of sin, salvation, and sanctification; the doctrine of humanity itself. All these have been corrupted and twisted as a result of a false theology of sexuality. Sexual theology can be done in either an evangelical or a liberal mode. The choice is yours; but for God's sake, wrestle with the task, and do something about it, so that religion is not prostituted any longer.

Indeed, I have a feeling that the development of a theology of sexuality for all Christianity, might be the greatest contribution MCC could ever make to the Christian world. "Who knows but what you have come into the world for such a time as this?"

I really believe it is foolish to tackle questions of sexual ethics without first redoing sexual theology. To attempt to do so is to distribute lesbianism and homosexuality around the same norms that have been the source of our oppression both in the church and outside it. The whole idea of sexuality as received in Western culture is a socially constructed and hierarchically defined category whose definition, regulation, and meaning change according to the social praxis of straight white males. What we must do is challenge this intrinsic definition, even as we challenge the oppressive system it was designed to legitimate.

In this respect I must say something about Samaritan Theological Institute. STI is extremely important. If you will notice, in the gay community, we have created all kinds of social institutions. There are gay churches and gay bars and gay business establishments; but there are no gay schools. Now the easy answer as to why this gap occurs, would be to say it is because of the ambiguous relationship of parenting (and children) among

lesbians and gay men. But I don't think this is the correct answer. I think it is rather because we lack knowledge about our own gay life and condition - because we lack agreement and understanding about the socialization we experience as lesbians and gays in a heterosexual world, and because we lack a common culture to transmit to future generations. It seems to me that the gay community has no point of reference of its own, but derives all of its meanings from the straight world. Indeed, Samaritan Theological Institute occupies a singular and salutary position in this respect: it is the only effort of lesbians and gays to establish some kind of educational institution to think through these problems and to develop a theology of sexuality. Because of this, it may be the most important endeavor of MCC, other than worship and evangelism.

Third, I believe God is calling this organization (not only to reevaluate its relationship to culture, and not only to develop a theology of sexuality, but) to form a new community. We have seen a lot of emphasis lately on the idea of community. Radical evangelicals, Catholic charismatics, pacifist churches, the Catholic Worker Movement, and non-religious neighborhood self-help groups, are all espousing the concept of community. Certainly, community is a viable concept; it is an improvement over hierarchical figures of speech. But community itself is an innocuous term that is sometimes used to mean something good, and sometimes used to mean something less than good. It may mean no more than the building and edifying of an elitist collection of persons who already share narrowly defined objectives. Thus we have communities that exclude non-charismatics, communities that exclude non-fundamentalists, communities that exclude sexist male privilege over women, communities that demand complete obedience from all members in the name of discipleship and shepherding, and communities that are virtually nothing more than exclusive gatherings of those who share privilege, wealth, and power.

So community itself is not enough. I have myself heard complaints that there are some local MCC's that are little more than a social club for white males. But this is a reputation the church cannot afford to have if it is to serve and to save the entire gay community - a just, a loving, a righteous and liberating center. It must become the place where the Spirit

of Jesus Christ is at work liberating the poor, delivering the captives, giving sight to the blind, freeing the slaves and the incarcerated, and proclaiming the inauguration of a new era of God. But MCC can only become this inasmuch and insofar as it is identified with those who are on the outside, those who are on the bottom, and those who are poor, and those who are powerless.

Only if MCC becomes a community of the oppressed, can it fulfill its calling and its mission. Becoming a community of the oppressed will be evidenced by becoming a community among the oppressed, and between the oppressed, and for the oppressed - all the oppressed: Blacks, Hispanics, and all people of color, women, and gays. Gay Christians will then no longer consider straight white males, and the established structures of Christendom, and Western society, and the northern hemisphere, and the North Atlantic Community, as natural allies. No longer then will MCC consider these its frame of reference, the center of its affection, or the home of ultimate loyalty. It is not enough to be pro-Black, or pro-Hispanic, or pro-women; we must challenge the concepts which support and bolster racism and sexism.

In conclusion, let me say that this church, which I love although I am not officially a member of it, cannot afford to be regarded as just another Protestant sect, or even as some novel sociological development inevitably produced by changing times. It is not simply the outgrowth of a sexual revolution of the sixties, nor the manifestation of unresolved guilt complexes suffered by participants in the gay liberation movement of the seventies. Nor even is it a sign of Americans' fascination with new religious movements in the eighties. MCC must not become simply a place where fundamentalists (who cannot be accepted in their own Bible-believing churches) seek a fortress of faith from which they can hurl back fiery darts of spiritual pride that say, "See, I can be just as conservative as you in every other area." And neither dare it become a hodge-podge conglomerate of anything and everything that speaks the name of religion, resulting in loss of definition, a lack of vision, and a lessening of faith.

I believe MCC is called to a new vision, a new hope, and a new task - something that has not yet been accomplished in any other denomination. It might not be accomplished here, but the choice is up to you.



# Love<sup>with</sup> Justice

LOUIE CREW

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THE AMERICAN NOVELIST Frank Norris is credited with saying:

"Humanity - ugh! Individuals - ah!"

Probably most of us share this rather romantic perspective on the world, especially those of us troubled with the stupidity of the herd as manifested in racism, sexism, classism, and the like. As one of my mentors put it, "I can't make much of a difference against the System, but I can embrace those around me that I care about who want to be embraced, and together we can huddle to wait out the other nonsense." This kind of attitude has a compelling boldness about it, a dignity and a resistance in the face of admittedly impossible odds. Persons get saved this way, even if whole groups or nations perish, so the notion goes.

Mathew Arnold romanticized the notion most completely in his famous poem "Dover Beach," in which, after noting all the cause for alarm in the mad world where groups continue to war, he says, "Ah, love, let us be true to one another." The private vision. The insular solution.

While I like to play romantic games about as much as anyone else, I believe them to be very dangerous, especially when private visions retreat from public responsibility. I am very grateful that Dr. Martin Luther King did not embrace Coretta Scott and say, "Ah, love, let us be true to one another" and assume that he had said enough. I am glad that Rosa Parks did not stand in the back of the bus mumbling, "I guess I can just huddle back here with all of those I care about and it won't make much difference that the bus driver told me to get out of the seat in the white section." I am glad that Nat Turner did not just find himself an interracial gay relationship and retreat to Fire Island or the Club Baths.

I spend most of my time working within two of our culture's oldest institutions, the university and the church. Both have some very terrible records in their abuses of individuals. Think for a moment of all of the minds that have been permanently sealed by the deadly jargon of

the academy. Think of all of the scalliwags, bright and industrious, who have been empowered by a diploma from Whitier or Duke or Harvard or Yale or the University of Wisconsin to go forth all the better to damage a society that deserves more from its reservoir of talent. Why bigoted and corrupt judges alone, all among the most educated, are a major menace to our chances of a just society. And what of the politicians, bankers, lawyers, and physicians who have attended and graduated from some of the best schools in the land, many of them paid for by taxed labor of the poor and the dispossessed, only to take their jobs almost exclusively for the private and personal gain that they can get out of them? When some of my colleagues ask me, "Louie, why do you waste your time with the church, in view of its horrible record of hypocrisy, bigotry, vested interest, classism, etc.?" I often mutter to myself, "And do you want me then to leave with great joy for an even fuller commitment to the university as if it is free of any such taints?" Surely one would have to be very naive to think that any of our institutions are free from very grave wrongs.

Then why bother? Why not just get us a nice little apartment or house in a small neighborhood with other folks that we like, have our own more limited but more just society, and not bother with structures too big ever to be very personal with anyone? Most academics I know have made that kind of decision. Most don't really pay much attention to any structures except those in their own classes, or maybe those structures required for all members of their departments. Most lesbians and gay males I know have done that. Life is hard enough without taking on the System, and clearly harder still if one starts being all that visible. Let's simply move off into our own ghetto, our own neighborhood. Most black folks I know have done that. For every Rosa Parks who is a resister, there must be a million more who won't take on the System. After all, it's hard enough

to make it being black in this biased society without raising an unnecessary fuss that will likely simply send one to the poor house, if not to jail. Most women I know have simply kept silent as men presumed to perpetuate their male privilege. Oh, when women or blacks or lesbians and gays get off by ourselves and unburden to one another, we can talk a big line 'of' resistance, when the ones offending us are not there to hear and are not likely to match our personal names with any reports we as a group may publish. It's easier to be second class. Besides, we who are second class have more rhythm, more sensitivity, more genius, more . . . you name it, we've got it.

How quickly we turn away from those in our ranks who have been permanently maimed or destroyed by the injustices which our society perpetuates against us. How quickly we romanticize the brilliant individual lesbian who got to be a state senator or the individual black gay entertainer who got to the top as a pop musician by hiding his identity as gay until he had money enough to send to help the local gay VD clinic in Los Angeles. How easily we forget about row on row of houses all over America where poor black folks rock on their porches never likely to know any of the benefits personally of living in the richest nation on the earth in its acclaimed "glorious space age."

After all, we got where we did by the sweat of our own brow, didn't we? All those others, they're just dumb or lazy, aren't they? Fools, just don't know how to get up and go, to follow the American dream, right? Take Dr. King, for example. Now there's a man who did it all on his own. It meant nothing that he could afford to go to Morehouse and later to seminary. Anyone who wants to can do those things? Every ghetto baby has an equal chance in this great country with every kid named Rockefeller or Reagan, right?

I really like my individuality. I nourish the rich heritages that mix from the black half of my family and the white half. I'm really pleased that given some hard choices - not the choice of being a heterosexual white male city-slicker millionaire, and believe me, they have it easier than any of the rest of us, but a

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harder choice - I have chosen to try to be good at who I am, a white male rural gay person with more than an average-sized income. My individuality gives me lots of pleasure. I'm glad that I have worked through some of my inherited stupidities, such as any Southern white man born in 1936, 28 years before any real integration, was bound to inherit. I take responsibility for my weaknesses and for trying to do something about them, and I recommend that kind of responsibility for anyone. But let's not romanticize our private success or our private failures, mine, yours, or those of the famous whom we might want to revere. It is not enough that you or I or those whom we can embrace can make it in at least limited ways. We desperately need a vision of the larger structural changes that are necessary to effect any lasting and sweeping changes in the problems of our world. In a world under the threat of a nuclear holocaust, in a world with hundreds dying of starvation every day, in a world where the vast majority cannot even read and write, private solutions are not enough.

One of the good things about institutions is their staying power. Once structures are securely in place, they have a way of sticking around long after their creators have vanished. It was the language of slave-owner Jefferson, as a drafter of the Constitution of the United States, that had to be used, admittedly in a new way, to bring an end to slavery itself and later an end to segregated schools. Education, which we socialized well over one hundred years ago in a pioneering way for the world, has a way of sticking around persistently insisting that every American child will have at least the possibility of learning to read and to write. The Church started building leper colonies on the other side of the globe well over 100 years ago, and recently some of those have finally closed, not because the Church gave up, but because the last lepers there were healed. If we can get our government, our schools, our courts, our churches, and all of our other institutions to make the right kinds of commitments, we have a better chance that they will stay around to do the jobs which we as individuals can't stay around to do with all of our romantic sense of our own importance.

My great-great-grandfather and his two brothers taught freed slaves in Richmond, Virginia, to read and write in 1810: They were very unpopular folks as Quakers with such strange notions in that time and place. My great-grandfather, a

mere two generations later, returned to Coosa County, Alabama, having been a private in the Confederacy; he was known for two things, his alcoholism and his repeated boast, "So long as there's a Nigger left in the world, I'll never put on my own coat again." Now three more generations later, my black husband owns that man's watch and together we sleep in the same bed those Quakers had had. Let's not be romantic about all of this. For my spouse and me, that kind of family history is important, but it surely is a very unstable basis on which to construct a just racial policy for a nation. We need institutional change.

Black and White Men Together is a potentially very explosive organization if its members want to commit themselves to contributing to this process of institutional change. I am pleased that all of the literature that I have seen from various chapters tends to suggest, on paper at least, a commitment to changing the large, impersonal institutional structures of our society so that we will reverse the current economic and social inequities which are the continuing legacy of slavery. I am pleased to read about how groups have banded together to attack the long-standing egregious policies of discrimination at some of our gay commercial enterprises. I am pleased to hear that blacks and whites have together protested card discrimination. I am pleased to hear that some chapters have begun to look much more analytically and searchingly at the largely gay male phenomenon of "gentrification," whereby a few folks have willingly abandoned their white privileges and moved into mixed and poor neighborhoods, often trying to be good neighbors to those already there, and have fixed up their property only then to make way for wealthier and more elitist gays to buy up larger portions and then pressure the indigenous folks to move away. Thereby often well-motivated plans turn sour. *Gentrification* becomes the wrong word; it should be called *Re-segregation* or *Block-busting*. I hope that more and more chapters will begin to document these cases and to seek to mediate creative alternatives, ways to build stable, racially integrated communities.

My spouse reported after reading one of the popular gay male novels last summer that its main reference to blacks was at best incidental: one character when asked about a bar popular the year before, replied, "Oh, you won't want to go there: *it's gone black*" (italics mine).

That's the kind of talk almost any of us who are white can pick up when other whites get off in groups by themselves. Sometimes the folks who speak the line, and very often those who hear the line, fail to hear what is really being said, viz., that a vast majority of white gays are simply not going to spend their money unless integration is limited. It is hardly fair for the same folks to get all worked up about a bar owner who has been caught requiring more IDs from blacks as a means of keeping the numbers of blacks down on any one night. The self-righteous must be made to realize that it is their own spending habits which cause the bar owner to do their dirty work for them.

When I taught in black colleges in Georgia and Alabama, I was amazed to find how many of my white colleagues knew almost nothing about the lives of the majority black faculty members away from the campus. One of my freshmen students made me very unpopular with the other whites when I encouraged his survey of them by which he discovered that on a city map they could locate most major white churches, but not the churches of their black colleagues, most major white restaurants, but not those frequented by their black colleagues, all of the cemeteries for white folks, but not cemeteries for black folks. . . . They were little different from the Great White Fathers among the earlier missionaries whom they would probably claim to deplore. They were cultural imperialists, bringing with them all of their received values but no sensitivity to the values of their new environment. They dare to teach Wordsworth, but had never heard of James Weldon Johnson. They knew nothing of the richly black traditions of our common history and literature. If Black and White Men Together aspires to nothing more, it would be better not to have been started.

Carter Heyward, one of the first eleven women to be made priests of the Episcopal Church, says that "Love without justice is cheap sentimentality." I believe that very strongly. Ernest and I understood our divorce contract before we ever understood our union: each would own half. We told our tiny community in Middle Georgia much more about the quality of our relationship when we took out a joint checking account than when we appeared together to reveal our gender and our race. (Furthermore, when we cashed our first check together, the effect was as dramatic as it would have been had our pictures



appeared in *THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION* with the heading, "Two Grooms Wed in Fort Valley.")

Black folks and white folks have been having sexual congress in this country since the first boat of blacks arrived in 1619, two years before the Pilgrims arrived to institute Puritanism and its purges. The first documented capital punishment for sodomy in this country was fewer than thirty years later, when a black man was drowned for the offence in New York while the officials required his underage white lover to watch! Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence routinely had sex with their slaves, and we have no reason to feel that Kinsey's ten percent homosexual factor was any less operative then than now. We need researchers to document interracial gay male and lesbian sex along the underground railroad by which white folks and black folks cooperated to get slaves to freedom. Much of this information has all along been in the hands of scholars who have perniciously tried to keep it in footnotes or in musty manuscripts in special collections. Carl Van Vechtan, white critic and author of a strange book called *NIGGER HEAVEN*, was one of the major promoters of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the single most important black literary movement in this country before the 1950s; yet Van Vechtan's wife burned most of his literary effects to prevent the world from knowing of his part in the elaborate homosexual connections of that group. Some of the main scholars who are knowledgeable about these affairs hold major chairs of literature as black academics now; many of them are themselves rather notoriously promiscuous, as on Hunter Street near Atlanta University, but won't begin to share this kind of truth that would jeopardize their own respectability. Again, the vision has been romanticized; the educated have used their brains to promote themselves more than to promote the truth. When I edited a special issue of *COLLEGE ENGLISH* (November 1974) on "The Homosexual Imagination" with Rictor Norton, we wrote several scholars

who could have steered black students to this material to write it up for that effort, but we were not given the courtesy of a reply.

No one yet has written the story about the immense amount of interracial gay sex that was a major factor in the Civil Rights Movement. My father was a friend of Alabama's U.S. Senator John Sparkman. Like other Southern Congresspersons attempting to discredit the Civil Rights Movement, Sparkman circulated to many of his constituents all of the evidence the FBI would feed him on the sexual liaisons that were uncovered. I remember my avid interest in reading police accounts of homosexual entrapment of one of the main brains behind organizing the famous March on Washington. I have interviewed several dozen white and black gays who were there in the march from Selma to Montgomery. One of my friends is a former assistant pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Dr. King's old church, in Atlanta. Everyone there knew he was gay for several years and he was respected for his youth work: he was removed for having a white lover.

James Baldwin once speculated that he probably would never win a Nobel Prize for literature because he had the guts to be candid with homosexuality in serious fiction long before most other major writers were.

Our gay interracial concerns have a very complex past, some of it noble, some of it sordid. But we mark the beginning of an era in which that done formerly in secret is now declared openly, responsibly.

One of the first remarks that I remember about gay people from a member of my family was my one Yankee aunt's comment, "But they are always slumming, going around with blacks and the like." Certainly earlier in our struggles when there was only one bar in the town where we were welcome at all, one did not think much to ask about the color of the other folks there. But surely black folks will be stepping down in the world much too much if today they are willing to give much space in

their lives to folks who do not value them, treasure them for our shared black and white histories, honor them for their intrinsic personal worth, respect them for who they can become on their own and in our unions one with another.

But our forefathers sometimes did that very privately. Romance is beautiful and efficacious for individuals. Let us also be about the more impersonal commitments to restructure the society to guarantee more permanent justice. Find what your individual talents are and give them in an effective way to such efforts. You should find the organizations most suited to your own vision of the change, and pay your dues, whether the NAACP, CORE, the Urban League, Christians for Socialism, your own neighborhood youth projects, ACLU, NOW, or another. I am continually amazed to discover how few folks support any of these efforts, with a small and important remnant on the rolls and funding most of the work of at least two or more. The very limited gains which we enjoy today over earlier years are not handouts willingly given by benevolent folks who control our society and want, in the words of Reagan, "to return to the good old days when there were no race problems." The gains are hard-won by the contributions of Rosa Parks and others who resisted with life, limb, and bank account to make them happen.

Finally, we should never forget that race itself is simply a myth that has been institutionalized and given significance. Logically there is no more reason to sort folks out by color than by whether they are left or right-handed, tall or short, hairy or smooth, cut or uncut . . . . And once as individuals we really get to know one another, race has a pleasant way of doing a vanishing and reappearing act, sometimes significant, more often irrelevant. The structures we now have in our institutions and the myths that we have bought in our own minds often do not let us perceive this reality. But we must hold onto the truth of our unity, blacks and white together, if we are to be prepared for the long battles ahead.



# THE NEWS

## NCC Delays Vote

IF YOU DIDN'T notice, UFMCC applied last September for membership in the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Dived for the nervous arms of this bold advocate of justice. Sought to join forces with a venerable voice for sanity, which suddenly isn't exactly coherent. Which hasn't gone unnoticed by the conservative *Christianity Today*.

For the entertainment of our readers, we thought we'd report what appeared in the January 22, 1982 issue of *CT*. In a piece by J.D. Douglas called "A Talking Tour Through 'The God Box,'" says here:

"When I raised the matter of possible NCC membership for the Metropolitan Community Churches (the so-called gays), [NCC General Secretary Claire] Randall referred me to a statement by Arleon Kelly, head of constituent membership affairs. This read: 'Considering the historical position and doctrinal practices of the communions that compose the National Council of Churches of Christ, it appears to me extremely doubtful that 21 of the necessary members would vote for the inclusion of the MCC.'

"Here I pause for ironical reflection. The NCC might conclude that to have drawn a circle that takes in as many as possible might not have been such a good idea after all. The MCC feel they fulfill the formal requirements for membership. It is hard to imagine the NCC rejecting such an application solely on biblical grounds. For the council to have recourse to 'the historical position and doctrinal practices' of member denominations has an oddly archaic, even disingenuous, ring about it . . .

"In addition, for the NCC to reject the MCC without reason adduced might be regarded as contravening its own vaunted emphasis on religious toleration - and justice would not have been seen to be done."



Well, Surprise. In March, the Constituent Membership Committee voted 9-0 that UFMCC qualifies for membership according to NCC's five criteria.

But then, the NCC Governing Board met in Nashville, in May, and examined UFMCC's Nancy Wilson and Adam DeBaugh. After two hours of what Wilson described as positive discussion (with opposition voiced only by a Greek Orthodox representative), they narrowly rejected credential chair Oscar McCloud's recommendation of acceptance. (McCloud is a United Presbyterian executive in New York City; the vote was 88 to 77.) Instead, they adopted the substitute motion of Disciples of Christ executive Paul Crow, referring the anxiety-producing issue to NCC's Commission on Faith and Order - which must present a detailed "study of the ecclesiological issues raised by the application" within a year, probably at an NCC session in San Francisco. A conservative move for a three-year study was defeated.

After the expected Governing Board vote finally to accept the committee's eligibility report, the committee must vote to recommend membership. Then the application goes back to the Governing Board, which must approve it by a two-thirds vote. Finally, two-thirds of NCC member denominations must approve.

## ANOTHER EDITOR, STI CHIEF, QUIT AT MCC

LOS ANGELES—Two resignations, together with a deficit that may total as much as \$50,000, cooled UFMCC's post-General Conference season as 1981 ended. Steven D. Preston, Interim Editor of the MCC newsmagazine *IN UNITY*, quit first. He was followed by Dr Richard J. Follett, after a year as Executive Director of Samaritan Theological Institute. Both are based in Los Angeles. Follett's resignation was preceded by that of STI Registrar Rev. Pepper Shields.

Preston had been appointed Interim Editor last January when Editor T. Earlye Scott resigned in a protest of UFMCC publication policies. He resigned in October, also in protest of UFMCC publication policies. (Scott had replaced Donna Wade, who resigned as Editor in December, 1979, in protest of UFMCC publication policies.)

In an October 7 letter to the Board of Elders, Preston said;

"I had thought that I had communicated successfully to the Board that an Editor of a magazine must be given editorial independence the ability to not only plan the content of the magazine, but also to weigh the content of submitted articles for consistency with that issue of the magazine and with the magazine's purposes . . . I had thought that I had also clearly communicated my frustrations with the Moderator's continual dictatorial interference with my duties. I guess I had not."

Preston's complaint of interference continued:

"If you will re-read the 'Editor' section of the Comprehensive Policy that this Board adopted and that General Conference endorsed, you will find that I am under contract to the Board, not to the Moderator, to have full responsibility to you for the magazine. But rather than serve as the 'facilitator of communication' described in the policy, I consider that the Moderator has abrogated" the contract "by his continuing interference in the operation of the magazine."

Preston charged he had been "repeatedly told by the Moderator not only what topics and articles will and will not be covered in the magazine, but also generally who will and who may not write them." He had "arranged for articles to be submitted for printing - promising such to Elders and to others - without consulting either myself as Editor or the Editorial Board . . . The Moderator cancelled the July/August issue - again without any prior consultation with me as Editor - even though the issue was 95 percent ready for the printer . . . printer . . ."

Why the cancellation? Not just money, claimed Preston. The issue "was to highlight the issues of General Conference in an article that the Editorial Board requested from Elder Nancy Wilson . . ."

The Board of Elders, he said, is responsible for permitting the interference despite its stated policy. And, said Preston, his ability to do his work was made to be "verging on the impossible" when the office copier was made inoperable during evenings and weekends "in spite of the fact that I was hired with the clear understanding" that those were the hours when Preston, who works



elsewhere during weekdays, would be working on the magazine. According to Preston, a 32-page magazine required several hundred photocopies to produce, but he was neither consulted nor informed about the policy. He complained also of a "censorial Editorial Board" and the appointment of yet another "interim," rather than permanent, Editor, to succeed him.

In his strongest barb, Preston charged, "Troy Perry dictates what the Fellowship is to read in its own magazine, and by your (Board of Elders) acceptance of his plea to have a few more months to make it what he wants it to be, you are acquiescing in that."

The cancelled issue had been almost ready for the printer "who was ready to print it in time for mailing before General Conference, "according to Preston. Reached in Los Angeles, Wilson doubted there would have been time to print the issue, which, she said, was late in preparation. That, rather than her own critical article, she said, was the reason for the cancellation.

UFMCC Founder-Moderator Rev. Troy D. Perry has declined comment for now.

Follett cited the low funding priority given the school, and "anti-intellectual, anti-education, and increasingly censorious attitudes" within UFMCC in his letter of resignation dated December 4. In it, he told the Board of Regents:

"This decision was reached over a long period of praying and thinking and was solidified upon my return from the East Coast. When I returned here on December 1, I discovered that we were again a full week behind in payroll and that I did not have enough to cover my personal apartment rent . . . . Needless to say, my other financial obligations are going unpaid at the moment. I need not and shall not live under that kind of financial pressure any longer."

Expressing "frustration" over the lack of "the tangible support we should have had from the community which we have attempted to serve so well," Follett added, "I do not think the Board of Regents had taken itself as seriously as it should have and as it must in the future." The Regents have the responsibility of raising the school's budget of \$1800 a month, but the figure has not been reached since a major funding source was rechanneled into a proposed television ministry.

"I am deeply concerned about the anti-intellectual, anti-educational, and increasingly censorious attitudes I see

within the UFMCC; STI was, I believe, a small step toward reversing some of these injurious trends," he said. The resignation leaves Rev. Lucia Chappelle as the only remaining STI employee. Follett will teach literature in the Los Angeles school system.

## TINNEY DRAWS FIRE

WASHINGTON--For the first time since James Tinney came out and founded the Pentecostal Coalition for Human Rights, the Pentecostal press has taken notice, generally to View With Alarm.

Dr. Tinney, 38, a journalism professor at Howard University and lay theologian in his Church of God in Christ, was already a familiar figure among Pentecostals. He has published more than 1,000 articles on Pentecostal history and related topics. He founded and edits *Spirit*, a scholarly journal of Black Pentecostalism, and wrote *Black Pentecostalism: An Annotated Bibliography*. He served as guest editor of *Logos Journal* when the charismatic magazine needed somebody who knew a few black people to edit a special issue. (*Logos* went broke and folded in December.)

Last Summer, *Logos* opined that Tinney's coalition had "transgressed the bounds of biblical decency" by "asking us to condone immorality." Said the editorial, "We have a responsibility to minister to those who are willing to repent, but those who will not repent must be told to leave."

The Assemblies of God *Pentecostal Evangel* introduced its readers to Tinney and PCHR by reporting the resignation of an Apostolic pastor from the editorial board of *Spirit*. The resignation letter opined that Tinney's stand on gay rights was "the most incredible statement ever to come from one who claims the Pentecostal experience." The Church of God in Christ *Whole Truth* magazine ran a two-part series by the church's New York bishop, who took Tinney to task for "promoting a new antinomianism." Claimed Rt. Rev. Ithiel Clemmens, "By using terms like sexual minority, oppression, rights, disenfranchisement, and homophobia, homosexual advocates put defenders of orthodox biblical faith in the position of being seen as oppressors rather than as stewards of the mysteries of God . . . . Young minds that are theologically untrained and biblically shallow are in danger of being radicalized toward the view that the church ought to be more compassionate and allow

practicing homosexuals membership in good standing like it does whoremongers, liars, adulterers, and fornicators. The truth is that none of these shall inherit the kingdom of God."

At a conference of his denomination, a bishop likened him to Samson, a "man anointed of God, extremely talented and gifted, yet with a great weakness." A colleague, the Pentecostal chaplain at Howard, fired Tinney from his post as faculty advisor to the university Pentecostal Student Fellowship (he maintains his teaching position).

When the PCHR and the New York City chapter of Black and White Men Together visited Wahington Temple in Brooklyn and generously distributed literature, pastor F.D. Washington, who is a Church of God in Christ bishop, invited Tinney to introduce the group during the worship service.

## MORAL MAJORITY RAISES MILLIONS, SPENDS MORE

LYNCHBURG, VA--The Moral Majority more than doubled its annual revenue to \$5.77 million in the fiscal year that ended August 31, but spent \$6.12 million, according to a December audit.

The income was up from \$2.21 million in the previous year, but the spending left a deficit of \$353,938. That, added to the \$205,697 deficit from the previous year, leaves a deficit of more than half a million dollars.

Ronald Godwin, Moral Majority's executive director, said the increased income reflected continued public support. "During a period when much of the media made predictions of our early demise and our loss of influence and clout, grass-roots Americans were increasing their support for us," he said. He called the deficit "operational," saying it wasn't bad for an organization with 4.5 million to 5 million contributing members. It's less, he said, than one month's income.

What did MM spend \$6.12 million on? Roughly, \$4.42 million for lobbying and publications, and \$1.69 million for management and organizational expenses, including \$924,906 for fundraising. The income represents \$5.75 million in contributions and \$20,331 in interest income. Moral Majority spends 16 cents on fundraising out of each dollar raised.



## BLACK AND THIRD WORLD GAY AND LESBIAN CONFERENCE: A REPORT

By MAX SMITH

From the night of June 28, 1969 when the Stonewall Inn revolt occurred through today the lesbian/gay rights movement has been, to varying degrees, racially integrated. But on the weekend of Nov. 27-29, 1981, the second Third World Lesbian/Gay Conference and the second annual National Coalition of Black Gays (NCBG) general convention was held simultaneously at the CrossCurrents Center in Chicago. This community owned and operated facility was chosen and community housing was provided in order to demonstrate support for the ERA ratification effort. NOW staffed a booth in the lobby entrance to the conference/convention site for the whole weekend.

One hundred twenty-five people paid a \$12 per day registration fee to attend. Sixty percent in attendance were women, 40 percent were Black, 25 percent Hispanic, 25 percent Asian-North American and the remainder were Native American (Indian) and of European descent. Participants' countries of origin were: Guam, Canada, Haiti, Ecuador, Sweden, Chile, Pakistan, Peru, Hong Kong and eight U.S. states. Quality rather than quantity is indicated here. It was a weekend of leadership training and development for dedicated Third World gay rights activists and organizers. Letters requesting support and more information arrived from those unable to attend who had received one of the 4,000 announcements sent last summer to every lesbian/gay organization or publication's address NCBG/Chicago could find — anywhere in the world.

The conference's keynote speaker, Ms. Cherrie Moraga of New York, encouraged the building of a stronger Third World lesbian/feminist consciousness, and in doing so really changed the scheduling of the 90 minute workshop: "Forming a Grassroots Third World Lesbian-Feminist Movement: A Strategy." The workshop lasted five and a half hours. "It changed my whole life" was an often repeated reaction to the breakthrough, cutting-edge viewpoints generated in it.

Native American Barbara Cameron, an organizer of the San Francisco gay freedom day parades, was the conference's

featured speaker. She encouraged all present to exploit the opportunity that the conference of such a very wide collection of human talents and human strengths presents. She noted that three or four times before Native American gay groups have formed and folded. A lack of effective inter-group communications was faulted.

Daniel Tsang, editor of the Philadelphia *Gay Insurgent*, spoke at the opening session of the need for Third World gays to recognize that the election of Reagan presents a great challenge and opportunity. Tsang said the Reagan agenda is a repeat of serious repressions of the past which included concentration camps for Japanese-Americans (but not German or Italian-Americans) in the state of Nevada in the 1940's and FBI attempts to subvert the civil rights movement in the 1960s. White gays who don't consider themselves "political" are naive to think that in the 1980s such actions may not be imposed upon them, too.

Following the NCBG convention's keynote address by Ms. Barbara Smith, co-author of the book *This Bridge Called My Back* (Persophone Press), the convention re-elected Gilberto Gerald and T. Oshin of Washington, D.C. as co-chairs (gender parity is required by NCBG bylaws) and elected Chicagoans L. T. Merchant secretary and Chris Cothran national treasurer.

Entertainment was provided by Gay Asians of Toronto in a lambda ribbon dance.

Gay Latinos Unidos of Los Angeles indicated an interest in holding statewide Third World lesbian/gay conferences once each four months because such conferences have proven so beneficial and since cross country travel is so costly.

UFMCC's Department of Race Relations is organizing an International Third World Lesbian and Gay Christian Conference to be held in Washington, D.C. October 22-24, 1982. Its purpose is clearly to define the needs of Third World Lesbian and Gay Christians and to develop concrete ways of ministering to those needs. Workshops, panels, and discussions will cover such topics as Third World spirituality, how to cope with racism and sexism, the sacred music of Third World people, gay sexuality and the Bible, coming out in Third World countries, and more.

Prior to October, one-day planning conferences will be held around the country to focus on issues of importance to local people and to generate interest in the International meet. (The Chicago

chapter of NCBG will host such a mini-conference July 10.)

For more information, you may contact:

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## PRESBYTERIAN CHIEF ADVOCATES GAYS

THE MODERATOR OF the 193rd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, Robert M. Davidson, has expressed the hope that "the time is not far off when the full participation of lesbian and gay persons in the life of the United Presbyterian Church will no longer be seen as a threat but as promise."

In a Christmas message directed to Presbyterians for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, Davidson quoted Mary's Magnificat as a promise of justice, adding, "As Mary looked forward to the birth of her child, we too can look forward to a day of universal brotherhood and sisterhood within the church where the supposedly lowly are lifted to a level of equal standing in regard to membership, ordination and witness within the church."

Acknowledging that "there are sincere about a homosexual lifestyle," he claimed that there are, nonetheless, "many others who find comfortable the homophobia of the society and wish to baptize it with sprinkling of biblical verses. Within the United Presbyterian Church . . . I look for a change in relationships in which no longer may some feel morally superior to the one tenth of our population who find themselves to be gay or lesbian."



# Three Symbols

George S. Buse

III

*In Auschwitz  
Where persons become playthings  
(The game played on them was a version of  
"Now you see them, now you don't")  
Some creatures took showers of poisoned gas.  
Then they were turned into smoke,  
And were sent up grimy chimneys toward an affronted sky.  
These  
Who came from earth substantial, whole and well-defined,  
Became odors that befouled the air.  
Others were dispatched to laboratories  
Where they were vivisected  
In harrowing experiments  
Intended to clinically clarify for pure Aryan scientists  
Why certain physiologies  
Had to be eliminated from the biosphere.  
In Auschwitz  
They used three symbols  
To define their actions.*

## I

*Some creatures wore the Yellow Star of David  
On meagre prison tunics.  
The Yellow Star of David — the symbol  
Assumed an ancient pollution of blood  
In Palestinian veins that centuries  
Of Christian virtue called "anathema."  
"Christ Killers" true believers called those polluted ones:  
They who praised their own cardio-vascular systems  
Formed the grammar for a millennial language of hate  
In Auschwitz.*

## II

*Some creatures wore the Pink Triangle  
On their prison blouses.  
The Pink Triangle — the symbol  
Assumed flagrant flaws of nature  
Of hidden abominations  
Of revealed abhorrences and corruptions of  
The conduits of love.  
Those who glorified their own genito-urinary systems  
And pronounced them pure, again  
Appealed the Christian virtue,  
Ratified by early Fathers,  
Enshrined in granite cathedrals  
That thrust obscene fingers of hate against the heavens  
Where love is said to have been born,  
And shouted: "Perverts,"  
"Faggots" of the lavender flames,  
And codified the ancient vocabulary of defilement  
That smothers humanity in hate  
In Auschwitz.*

*One man held in his right hand a Gold Cross  
Inside the hellish caverns that transected the good earth  
At Auschwitz.  
His cross was not a cloth patch, and ersatz symbol,  
It had three-dimensional substance.  
(It might have brought a respectable price  
In a Jewish pawn shop once).  
A cross:  
Gilded geometry joining verticle and horizontal planes  
At an axis where destinies intersect.  
The hand that held the cross  
Was that of a medical doctor clad in clinical white robes,  
Wearing white gloves.  
(Because he dressed in white  
He was called an angel — the Angel of Death).  
He used his gilded cross to direct traffic,  
To order the wearers of yellow stars and pink triangles:  
"You go left;  
"You go right."  
It doesn't really matter who went where:  
It was either earth to smoke,  
Organism to cadaver,  
Biology to chemistry,  
All ended up as dust to dust and ashes to ashes.  
What we must recall is  
The Gold Cross — the third symbol of Auschwitz.  
Once the symbol of redemption to life,  
It became the symbol of desecrations and death  
In Auschwitz.*

## IV

*How many people still traffic in gold crosses?*

*Jesus died on one made of wood, it was reported.  
Had he been incarnated and executed  
At a certain time, twenty centuries tardily,  
He would have had to save the world  
In a gas-filled shower room while  
Wearing a yellow star of David.....  
Or a pink triangle.....  
(Some creatures wore both).  
Had he been there then  
There would have been no crosses at all at Auschwitz.*

*Was a rough-hewn wooden cross  
Erected on a skull-configured hill near Jerusalem,  
A mangled young Hebrew male nailed at its axis,  
All the cross the world needs  
To define a universe of loss to malevolence and hate,  
To redeem a universe of gain by redeeming love?  
A horizontal plane stretched toward death,  
A verticle plane pointed to heaven?  
Or  
Do Gold Crosses still serve as traffic signs to hell?  
Could the Yellow Star or Pink Triangle  
Serve us now as symbols of redemption?*